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"THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD;"

OR,

May not this one World have a moral influence in all the Universe
which is an ample reason for its moral history?

A SERMON;

BY REV. AUGUSTUS BLAUVELT.

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SCHERMERHORN, BANCROFT & CO., Publishers,

130 Grand Street, New York.



TO THE READER.

The following note is at once the author's reason and apology for intruding this sermon upon your attention:

PORT RICHMOND, June, 24, 1865.

MY DEAR SIR:

Having listened with deep interest to your discourse upon Psalm xix., 1, delivered in my pulpit last Sabbath, I desire very much to obtain a copy of it. It was the utterance of thoughts which had long been floating in indistinct form in my own mind, and a noble vindication of the ways of the Most High in permitting sin to enter and ravage so long and fearfully in our world. I thank you for giving me new and higher views of this mystery. They have gone far to relieve my mind from a distressing perplexity which has often assailed me, as it doubtless has many others desiring to be devout students of the Divine character and works. Allow me to suggest the publication of the discourse. I sincerely believe that it would be useful to many of our brethren in the ministry, and others.

Dup. coll. 2. 0. 11

You have lifted me higher into the spiritual atmosphere, so that I feel better able to contemplate that mystery not only without dismay, but with mingled reverence and wonder that God, by such means, should accomplish a design so beneficent and grand.

Others also would thank you, if you would give them the opportunity. Think of what I suggest.

(Signed,)

Yours always,

JAMES BROWNLEE.

To REV. AUG. BLAUVELT,
Bergen Point, N. J.

"THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD."

PSALM XIX., 1.

It would be entertaining to pass an hour amid the curious conceptions, the brilliant superstitions of the ancients as concerns the constitution and extent of the physical universe. Higher purposes than mere amusement, however, are before us. Let us stand therefore for a moment beside the modern student of the skies, searching with telescopic eye after the glory of God in the heavens.

How the mind is staggered by the revelation! This spacious earth of ours, and yonder massive sun, encircled by his stupendous planets with their satellites,—these are the veriest atoms in the universe! Around, above, beneath, are out-lying a countless multitude of other celestial bodies. Indeed, it is computed that light itself, flashing through space as it does fully twelve millions of miles every minute, would yet require at least three millions of years to plunge across those out-lying spheres at their deepest range! And what a commentary have we here upon the character of that God who not merely created all these infinite hosts of heavenly orbs, but who from all eternity is likewise upholding and governing amid them, so that not in a single one of all their multitudes so much as a sparrow falleth to the ground without his will!

Still, it is not upon the merely physical aspects of the universe that we would look for a declaration of the divine glory. Let us the rather proceed to the discussion of the following topic: *Amid*

the myriads upon myriads of existent worlds, is this the only one inhabited by moral creatures? That such is not the case there seems to be the strongest presumptive proof. "Why suppose," says DR. CHALMERS, "that this little spot, little at least in the immensity which surrounds it, should be the exclusive abode of life and of intelligence? What reason to think that those mightier globes which roll in other parts of creation, and which we have discovered to be worlds in magnitude, are not also worlds in use and in dignity? Why should we think that the great Architect of nature, supreme in wisdom as he is in power, would call these stately mansions into existence and leave them unoccupied? * * * But this is not all; we have something more than the mere magnitude of the planets to allege in favor of the idea that they are inhabited. * * * They have the same succession of day and night, they have the same agreeable vicissitude of the seasons. * * * And God has also made to them great lights, to all of them he has given the sun to rule the day, and to many of them has he given moons to rule the night. To them he has made the stars also. And God has set them in the firmament of heaven to give light unto their earth and to rule over the day, and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God has seen that it was good. In all these greater arrangements of divine wisdom, we see that God has done the same things for the accommodation of the planets that he has done for the earth which we inhabit. And shall we say that the resemblance stops here, because we are not in a situation to observe it? * * * that the greater part of creation is an empty parade? and that not a worshipper of the Divinity is to be found through the wide extent of yon vast and immeasurable regions?

"It lends a delightful confirmation to the argument when, from the growing perfection of our instruments, we can discover a new point of resemblance between our earth and the other bodies of the planetary system. * * * We can see of one that its surface rises into inequalities: that it swells into mountains and stretches into valleys; of another, that it is surrounded by an atmosphere which may support the respiration of animals; of a third, that

clouds are formed and suspended over it, which may minister to it all the bloom and luxuriance of vegetation; and of a fourth, that a white color spreads over its northern regions as its winter advances, and that on the approach of its summer this whiteness is dissipated, giving room to suppose that the element of water abounds in it."

Again. Having stated wherefore it is that so many astronomers of the present day have concluded that each of the innumerable fixed stars revealed by the telescope is a separate sun, our author exclaims: "Shall we say then of these vast luminaries that they were created in vain! Were they called into existence for no other purpose than to throw a tide of useless splendor over the solitudes of immensity! Our sun is only one of these luminaries, and we know that he has worlds in his train. Why should we strip the rest of this princely attendance? Why may not each of them be the centre of his own system and give light to his own worlds? * * * Why resist any longer the grand and interesting conclusion? Each of these stars may be the token of a system as vast and as splendid as the one which we inhabit. Worlds roll in these distant regions, and these worlds must be the abode of life and intelligence. In yon gilded canopy of heaven we see the broad aspect of the universe, where each shining point presents us with a sun, and each sun with a system of worlds; where the Divinity reigns in all the grandeur of his attributes; where he peoples immensity with his wonders, and travels in the greatness of his strength through the dominions of one vast and unlimited monarchy!"

Such, much condensed and but in part, is the argument of CHALMERS. And to us there seems an irresistible force in his reasoning. Still the anonymous author of the work entitled "*The Plurality of Worlds*," has ventured to grapple with the champion mind of Scotland in this connection,—whether successfully or unsuccessfully we may not claim the scientific information essential to decide. Permit us however to present you with the decision of President HITCHCOCK, than whom there is perhaps none more qualified to judge in such affairs. He introduces the work in question to the American public. He confesses to an admiration for the ability of its argu

ment, and to a conviction of the truthfulness of many of its conclusions. He says: "Though we must demur as to some of the views of this work, we can cordially recommend its perusal to intelligent and reasoning minds. It is an effort in the right direction, and we think will do much to correct some false notions respecting the Plurality of Worlds." And again: "Are not the fixed stars the suns of other systems? We will thank those who think so to read the chapter in this work that treats of the fixed stars, and we presume they will be satisfied that at least many of these bodies exhibit characters quite irreconcilable with such an hypothesis. And if some are not central suns, the presumption that the rest are is weakened, and we must wait till a greater perfection of instruments shall afford us some positive evidence, before we know whether our solar system is a type of any others."

"Thus far," the President continues, "it seems to us that our author has firm ground, both geological and astronomical, to stand upon. But he does not stop here. He takes the position that probably our earth may be the only body in the solar system, nay, in the universe, where an intellectual, moral and immortal being, like man, has an existence. * * * He does not think it derogatory to divine Wisdom to have created and arranged all the other bodies of the universe to give convenience and elegance to the abode of such a being,—especially since this was to be the theatre of the work of redemption."

"Now,"—these are still the words of Dr. HITCHCOCK,—“we sympathise strongly in views that give dignity and exaltation to man, and not at all with that debasing philosophy, so common at this day, that looks upon him as little more than a somewhat improved orang. But we cannot admit that man is the only exalted created being to be found among the vast array of worlds around us. Geology does, indeed, teach us that it is no disparagement of divine wisdom and benevolence to make a world,—and if one, why not many,—the residence of inferior creatures; nay, and leave it without inhabitants for untold ages. But it also shows us that when such worlds have passed through those preparatory changes, rational and

immortal beings may be placed upon them. Nay, does not the history of our world show us that this seems to be the grand object of such vast periods of preparation? And is it not incredible that amid the countless bodies of the universe, a single globe only, and that a small one, should have reached the condition adapted to the residence of beings made in the image of God? Of what possible use to man are those numberless worlds visible only through the most powerful telescopes? Surely such a view gives us a very narrow idea of the plans and purposes of Jehovah, *and one not sustained, in our opinion, by the analogies of science.*"

Such then is the estimate of Dr. HITCHCOCK, as regards the ablest argument ever put forth, (so far as we know,) upon scientific grounds, to disprove the idea that other worlds beside our own are inhabited. The very man who introduces it to our notice at the same time pronounces it to be inconclusive upon the one great point before us, at the same time announces, that having read it in admiration for its ability, and as a disciple of some of its peculiar views, he still, as a man of science, remains unshaken in belief that it is "incredible that amid the countless bodies of the universe a single globe only, and that a small one, should have reached the condition adapted to the residence of beings made in the image of God." And if this be the judgement of its introducing friend, assuredly we arrogate nothing to ourselves in forming of it the same opinion, even that it is inconclusive as an attempt to disprove the idea for which, in common with Dr. CHALMERS, we are contending.

And now what saith the Scripture? Here we can expect no explicit revelation. The Bible might as well have fore-stalled a Columbus by revealing to the fathers the existence of this to them undreamed of continent, as to have anticipated the telescope by disabusing their minds of the idea that they could see the entire physical universe with the naked eye! On the same principle, we may as reasonably demand an express "thus saith the Lord" for the fact that this portion of our world was inhabited when discovered, as for the fact that similar worlds to this are, or are not, the abodes of

moral creatures. The subject is evidently one, not for divine revelation, but for human research and reasoning.

Does it therefore seem a topic fitter for the philosopher than for the preacher? Far be it from us to substitute man's conceits for "the truth as it is in Jesus!" but shall not ministers of the gospel avail themselves of the discoveries of modern astronomers in respect of the physical aspects of the universe, to show that the Hebrew Poet in no wise knew how grand a strain he sang in saying: "The heavens declare the glory of God?" Yea, and shall we not likewise extend our investigations amid the moral aspects of the universe, if haply we may be led to see that we have as yet ourselves but little understood how sublime this simple sentence of the Scripture is? This subject, then, is appropriate for the pulpit, though not a matter of direct revelation.

Thus far, that we may neither, on the one hand, look to the Scriptures for positive proof on the point before us, nor, on the other, be deterred from advancing in its discussion, as if it were a theme unseemly for the Sabbath and the sanctuary.

To proceed therefore. *The theory of the universe which we are advocating, appears to us plainly in the Divine Word as a matter of legitimate inference.* For example: "*God is Love.*" How he loves this one world! He has prayed over its wanderings in Gethsemane, and suffered because of its sins upon Calvary, rather than give it up as lost to his affections! Yea, he is represented as its Father, going daily to the door of the old homestead, and looking forth towards the far country in the which it was running its sad course of harlotry and riotous living. And when it came to itself a little, and began returning to implore a very servant's place in his favor, he would hear of this not a word, but ran forth and fell upon its neck and kissed it welcome home again. And can we conceive that this God hath children at this point alone in the physical universe—that in all other worlds he must wander as childless, must lavish his love upon naught but dust? Can mere matter satisfy the yearning of even a human heart? How much less that of the infinite Father! Or will some one say that the manner in which God hath mani-

fested his love for this one earth, looks as if it were an only child? Not so. The Lord Jesus Christ seems rather to indicate the truth when he says: "What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" Have we not in this passage more than an intimation of a plurality of worlds? Think not this interpretation far fetched or fanciful. It is not ours: it is ALFORD'S. Here is his language: "If it be required that the words should be literally explained, seeing that the ninety-nine *did not err*, then I see no other way but to suppose them to be *the world's that have not fallen*, and the one that has strayed, our human nature in this world." Not that this earth of ours is an *only* child, therefore, but that it is an only *lost* child; this apparently explains wherefore it is that God hath loved it thus above all others. But of this more anon.

Again. Take our text: "*The heavens declare the glory of God.*" Is this so, except the hypothesis of our argument be the truth? To illustrate. If this globe alone in the universe is inhabited, where then is God's glory as the *Creator* of the heavens? True, in their physical aspects, simply, they are a magnificent display of mere power—of wisdom likewise; that kind of wisdom known among men as mechanical skill. Thus far the heavens are, indeed, the handiwork of a God, worthy of and honoring to their Maker,—provided only and always that they are not an end, but merely a means to something higher. For when we search through yonder vast array of worlds after the divine glory, will it suffice if we discover in them simply that God is of infinite power and supreme among artisans? Nay; we must see in them some fuller manifestation—some more exhaustive development of his perfections. Such is in the midst of us, yea, such is man. Blot out the whole physical universe at a single stroke, but leave man and his kindred of loving hearts and reasoning minds and immortal spirits, if such there be in other spheres,—leave these and you have retained God's glory from the wreck of the entire material creation. And shall he who, at this point, has shown not only that he can make worlds meet for man to

dwell in, but also that he can make man himself,—shall this God at all other points in the universe descend to be a mere world-maker? Shall the sculptor who has evoked from marble such shapes of splendor that thousands and tens of thousands weekly stand before them, spell-bound by the mute eloquence of their beauty,—shall this sculptor now forsake his high vocation, and become a mere hewer of stone in the quarry? Shall the artist who not merely in respect of the fairy children of the imagination, but likewise as regards the very angels of heaven, can compel them, coming forth from their concealment in the winds, to linger upon canvas, like an enchantment—a celestial vision—amid the admiring multitudes of *connoisseurs*; shall this artist, after a single triumph of his genius, henceforward be known as but a dauber of signs, or a painter of houses? And, if of men we thus must reason, can it be possible that the same God who made man here, is but a world-maker elsewhere?—who created creatures in his own image here, is content with making merely immense masses of matter and twirling them idly in the air at all other points in the universe? A thought so derogatory to the divine character may not for a moment be conceded.

Nor is this all:—"The Lord," saith the Psalmist, "hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominions. Bless the Lord, O my soul." Here the divine Majesty is set forth as a King, seated upon his throne in the heavens, worthy of all honor and service and homage throughout his boundless domains. And, upon the supposition that in this world alone, amid the countless throngs of worlds, he hath or loving subjects or intelligent worshippers, where, then, is his glory as the *Ruler* of the universe?

Hear ye a parable. A certain monarch of a small island in the sea came into possession of a vast, uninhabited continent. Into this he sent forth year after year a multitude of laborers and artisans. And so, in process of time, the wilderness had vanished. In a mil-

lion fertile fields were heaped up the golden treasures of the harvest time. Herds were upon every hill-side, and flocks were in every valley. All over the land there were likewise mansions and hamlets and cities. And, after all these preparations, as if for the in-dwelling of a mighty nation, had been completed, behold it came to pass that the king in his imperial wisdom withdrew the very last man from that immense continent of his possessions, and outside of his insignificant island in the sea, had not a single subject! *Could* a mortal monarch, in his senses, so outrage every judicious principle of administering a realm? And are we yet to conceive that the God of infinite wisdom has fitted up all yon myriads upon myriads of worlds, and then left them without a single citizen? No, no! The heavens declare, not his folly, but his glory. He sits not upon their throne as a king without a subject, save in this the most paltry province in his measureless dominions. He reigns not in them as in a mere domain of dust—a vast expanse of solitude. Each world is a palace of royal natures. Yea, and as he journeys in all the grandeur of a God from one end of his illimitable empire to the other, he is everywhere welcomed with hosanna and worship and blessing, by a princely procession of his own sons and daughters! And with this conception in mind, let now the exhortation of the Psalmist go abroad in the heavens: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord all his works in all places of his dominions. Bless the Lord, O my soul!" Lean forward now and hearken with the soul!

A feeble note of praise ascendeth from this earth of ours. Above us angel and archangel, saint and cherubim and seraphim, take up the strain and smite it louder from their harps of gold. Nor is this all. Dream not that in all other places of the divine dominions there is no heart to love him, and no lip to bless! All the infinite hosts of the heavens join in this anthem of "Glory to God in the highest!" O thou who hast an ear for the spiritual, the actual, hear it this sacred Sabbath hour, that anthem of "Glory to God in the highest,"

rolling on forever and forever from world to world, pealing out eternally from system after system, until the mighty temple of the universe trembles in all its length and breadth, and height and depth with its sublime hallelujah !

Here then, my friends, we have a theory of the universe honoring to its divine Architect—supported on the one hand by the analogies of science, and upon the other, as it seems to us, by necessary inferences from Scripture, which we purposely forbear to multiply.

Yea, and we are persuaded that it is this theory of the universe which will yet furnish the key to all the moral mysteries, which appear in some regards to overhang the divine administration and movement at this one point in the infinite domain. And it is because of this conviction that we have been at so much pains to establish this theory as a felt fact in the midst of you.

It is not the sceptic, it is not the infidel, it is the christian who is in trouble, and needs comfort in respect of these apparent moral mysteries. They can scoff at God because of them, but not so he. They are often as a heart-burden to him, these dark unexplained passages in the history of the heavenly Father. True, the christian feels, yea, and by the highest exercise of reason, even faith, he *knows* that God *must* be in these mysteries only as the sun is in the clouds; that the angels above the clouds can see him, even now, in undiminished glory; and that we too shall thus behold him by and by. And yet, meanwhile, what time we here await the perfect revelations of the life to come, who of us, my brethren, can all repress a painful questioning and wondering in these regards? How could the all-merciful Father, foreknowing the fact, and with power to prevent it, not only permit, but predetermine that he would permit, sin to enter the very garden of Eden, and strike its fangs into the heart—infuse its poison into the nature—of all the unborn millions of our race? And is it also true that this serpent sin has involved Jehovah himself in its toils? Can he in verity be the very God, as well as a very man, he who, though in his God-head he have a perfect antidote against the poison of this serpent, is yet as it were compelled yonder upon Calvary to receive in his own heart its fangs?

Will a man fling away his life to pluck a straw from the ocean, when the tempest is abroad upon it? And will the infinite God submit himself to such indignity and suffering, as befell the carpenter from Nazareth, lest such worms of the dust as we should die, as we deserve, in our sins? And if indeed it be not all a dream, if indeed it be the great fact of all ages and all worlds, that God did so love us that he gave his only begotten Son to die for our salvation, then why, O why! did this Savior appear so late for our rescue? and, having at last appeared, why now rescue us so almost imperceptibly? Only think of it! During all the thousands upon thousands of years from the promise of Christ far back in the garden, onward and onward until his final coming in the clouds of heaven to judge the world in righteousness; during all this vast lapse of centuries, hundreds, and thousands, and tens of thousands of souls have been, are, and shall be perishing every moment! If God's Son has indeed undertaken to save us, why save but one, while a myriad perish, and save thus from generation to generation? And then the unsaved dead, is it in very truth, and beyond all hope, a needs-be that they should remain thus outcasts from the divine presence and love forever and for ever? With the help of the precious blood of Jesus, may not the infinite Justice at some point in eternity be enabled to say: "It is enough; no more can I demand the suffering of a finite and fallible creature for his sins?"

Such are the painful questionings concerning God, and sin, and death, and hell, with which we all are more or less oppressed at times, beloved in the Lord. And full well are we aware that there be some in the midst of us, who will be only too grateful for any, the very least, respite from their troubles of spirit in these directions. Take up, O our brother, the thought which we have sought to give you, even that this earth is but as a drop in the ocean of inhabited worlds. Look at it carefully. May it not be the key, as we have said, to all these moral mysteries? True, if such it be, we still may not hope to fully comprehend its mode of use this side eternity. Yet, like a child in the night, experimenting with the lock of an iron safe, we have sat, confident that it is the proper key, turning it this

way and that in the darkness, until we have seemed at last to hear one after another of these mysteries thrown back or starting.

To explain. Here is our key-thought: This world is only one amid the countless millions which are the abode of moral creatures. This we have established by argument. Or, if any present still are pleased to think otherwise, it will serve our purpose all the same to *assume* that we have done so.

A few words now concerning the manner in which we propose to use this key-thought.

First. What if among all the worlds this is the only fallen one? What if all beside our own are as pure and upright as they first came forth from the mind and hand of God? Such a supposition is, at the least, not without some show of proof. So far as we *know*, we of this earth, and, in part, angels, are the only beings in the universe who have sinned. We may not pass unnoticed in this connection, however, that remarkable theory of sin advanced by Dr. BUSHNELL, in his great work upon the "*Natural and Supernatural*." His idea is "that there is some antecedent necessity, inherent in the conception of finite and begun existences, that, in their training as powers, they should be passed through the double experience of evil and good, fall and redemption." He does not especially touch upon the case of other worlds, as we remember, but his theory leads him to maintain of the "good angels" that even they, "for aught that appears (in the Scriptures) have all been passed through and brought up out of a fall, as the redeemed of mankind will be;" to deny that even they can be instanced as "showing a complete possibility of creating free beings, or powers, that will never sin." Still, he is very careful to guard against allowing us to suppose that he so much as insinuates that there is any active, or, in any sense compelling, cause why "finite and begun existences" will almost to a certainty "lapse into evil." This almost certainty he traces back to the "*condition privative*," in which he conceives all finite beings to begin their existence. By this "condition privative" he intends:

1. "The necessary defect of knowledge and consequent weakness of a free person, or power, considered as having just begun to be."

2. The lack of a proper "drill-practice" in that "empirical training, or course of government," which he supposes requisite "to get them established in the absolute law of duty," and which "empirical training must probably have a certain adverse effect for a time, before it can mature its better results." For says he: "The eternal idea of justice makes no one just; that of truth makes no one true; that of beauty makes no soul beautiful. So the eternal law of right makes no-one righteous. All these standard ideas require a process or drill, in the field of experience, in order to become matured into characters, or to fashion character in the moulds they supply."

3. "There appears to be another condition privative," he continues, "as regards our security against sin, in the social relation of powers and their trial in and through that relation, viz.: that they are, at first, exposed to invasions of malign influence from each other, which can nowise be effectually prevented, save as they are finally fortified by the defenses of character." Such then is the "condition privative," in which he conceives all finite creatures of necessity to begin existence: And this is the reason which he gives for expecting their fall almost "as if it were determined by some law that annihilates liberty."

Now we freely confess that this theory of sin, as it is fully developed by Dr. BUSHNELL, appears extremely plausible,—urged upon us, as it is, by all the brilliant rhetoric, and subtle, powerful argumentation for which its advocate is so justly celebrated. And we congratulate ourselves that it is in nowise essential to our line of thought, that we *disprove* this theory by formal counter arguments. For Dr. BUSHNELL himself remarks: "It is not amiss to add, further, that what I have here advanced, in a somewhat positive form, concerning sin, I value mostly as an hypothesis. Indeed, what we want, to clear our difficulties here, is not so much a doctrine as to find that some rational hypothesis is possible." In this we quite agree with our distinguished author. And the only concern we have as against *his* hypothesis is this: to displace it, if possible, by another to which there lies, in some regards, less formidable objection. And here, therefore, permit us to both anticipate and digress by stating

what is the one great excellence which we would claim for the hypothesis which we are hastening on to state, as in contrast with that under discussion. It is this. That of Dr. BUSHNELL is based upon the idea that an actual experience in sin is so certain, that it seems well nigh essential, in order that finite and begun powers may become securely established in full and free obedience to the laws of perfect holiness: our own contends that the same end may be reached, without any such universal wreck and misery and shame among intelligences. To explain: It is not necessary that every child born into the world should in verity put its hand into the flame in order to become secure against the peril of fire. It is a merciful provision of Providence that the testimony and experience of one man as among the causes of discomfort, distress, danger, destruction and death, shall become wisdom, and safety, and life to thousands. Are the laws of Providence less beneficent in other parts of the universe than here? And what if, therefore, *the great mass* of finite and begun existences may be fully and finally confirmed in the righteous enjoyment of their liberty, by means of those moral inducements and considerations which may be furnished them *out of the experience of that few who venture to use their liberty as against God?* Is not such a supposition less revolting to every humane, not to say pious instinct of the Christian, than that we assume this result can be secured *only by their venturing in an entire mass upon such an awful experiment?* It is, therefore, not in the sense of disproving, but merely of displacing by a less objectionable one,—it is in this sense alone that our argument is directed against the peculiar theory of sin maintained by the sage of *Hartford*. But when, to harmonize his theory with revelation, he undertakes to prove that the very angels in heaven may not be adduced as “showing a complete possibility of creating free beings, or powers, that will never sin;”—that, “for aught appears” in Scripture, even they “have all been passed through, and raised up out of a fall, as the redeemed of this earth will be,”—then our argument demands that we say: “To the law, therefore, and to the testimony.”

To abbreviate this point as much as possible, we will begin by

granting him the interpretation of the 6th verse of Jude, which, following FABER, he adopts. So far from depending upon that as "the principal, or hinge-text on this subject," we will not use it at all. Peter, however, asserts that "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." This assuredly looks as if some of the angels had not sinned, and as if all who have, are in chains of darkness, instead of the light and liberty of heaven. But there is that passage in Colossians concerning Christ: "It pleased the Father, * * * by him to reconcile all things to himself,—by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." What does this mean? That Christ has reconciled fallen angels to God in any such sense as he is reconciling fallen men? No. "For verily he took not on him *the nature of* angels, but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham,"—or, to give the exact idea of the original: "Verily, he did not lay hold of the angels to help them, but the seed of Abraham he did lay hold of to help." If, therefore, the good angels have been raised up out of a fall, what hand raised them? Not that which was nailed to Calvary's Cross. Upon this point the Scriptures are explicit. What other hand did, then? If none beneath God's Son could redeem man, shall a less expiate the sins of an angel? Or shall man, though made "a little lower than the angels," not merely in endowments, but therefore in responsibility as well,—shall *he* yet be in imperative need of a Savior from sin, and *they* not? Indeed, the faith taught us by our fathers,—even that the angels in heaven have ever remained as pure as they were in the hour of their creation,—wherefore resist any longer the conclusion that we have this faith from God's own word as truly as from the fathers?

Thus much to establish our right to assert that, so far as we *know*, we of this earth and, in part, angels, are the only beings in the universe who have sinned. And we might now advance to give an air of proof that our knowledge on this point is in the line of truth. For instance, the comment of ALFORD upon the parable of the lost sheep, cited elsewhere, would not be without force in this connection.

But time presses and we forbear. Our knowledge is upon the side of the supposition that amid all the worlds this alone has revolted against High Heaven. Let us assume such to be the fact. The assumption will serve our purpose as well as would a demonstration.

Again. What if the moral history of this one world, in connection with that of the fallen angels, (and these are so intermingled as not to require a separate consideration,)—what if it be this moral history which deters all other worlds and all other beings from forsaking their original heritage of holiness,—which secures from them an eternal, intelligent, free-willed, spontaneous, loving obedience to God?

Men of science tell us that such are the laws of gravitation that the minutest particle of matter in the universe has a controlling influence over every other particle. And shall the material influences of this earth be more out-reaching than are its spiritual?

Do you ask *how* its influences could be borne abroad in all the universe? Look back into the Eden hour of our own world. Are not angels, and God in person, walking and talking as friends with man? And what are the saints to do in the long hereafter? There is no more homely wit than philosophy in the saying of our friend: "I cannot believe that we are to do nothing for all eternity, aside from sitting upon benches, singing psalms!" Who shall say, therefore, that all which angelic eyes have witnessed of the tragedy of sin in this earth, from its first act, more than six thousand years ago, down to this very moment, has not been told, over and over again, by angelic lips in every world, around, above, beneath? Who shall say that the redeemed in glory are not, as regards the past, the present and all the future, sent forth upon many a mission of love and mercy in all the universe,—highest among which it is to sit down in the bowers of Paradise after Paradise, and there relate the wonderful history of their sinning and their salvation? Yea, and may not the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely as the God, but as the God-man also, reveal himself to all his creatures in all places of his dominions? As he now appears at "the cool of the day," to walk among his unfallen children, in this Eden-world or that, may it not be that he appears, not

as he was wont before he became the Redeemer of our race, but as he was seen of his disciples what time he ascended into heaven? That body of his, and those wounded hands and side of his,—these are his greatest glory now, and surely every eye in all the universe shall behold them, and every ear shall hear their story, and every pure heart shall be melted, and fortified in virtue, by their meaning.

Thus, then, we can imagine *how* it is that the sad history of this one world in sin may be a moral influence in all other worlds. And do the Scriptures prohibit us from conceiving that this possibility may be a fact? So far otherwise, the angels are expressly represented as taking the deepest interest in the fate of every sinner here. Yea, and saith the Apostle: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I shall preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, (or, as we with equal right may render the Greek, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in all the universe,) might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." It is more than fanciful therefore,—it is apparently scriptural, to say that the moral influences of this earth may have gone forth throughout the entire extent of the divine dominions. And what if it be likewise true that the result of those influences is as if this one world is standing, and shall forever stand, as that beacon-light upon the shore of eternity, by which an universe of worlds are saved from moral shipwreck?

Such, then, is the hypothesis which we base upon the idea that this world of ours is only as a drop in the ocean of inhabited worlds,—even that it alone, amid all their millions, has used its liberty as against God, and that from its using its liberty in such wise, have out-flowed into all worlds, those moral influences, which interfere not with the liberty of moral creatures, but which secure them in the righteous enjoyment of that liberty, down through all the ages of their immortality. We do not ask you to admit that we have

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established the truth of this hypothesis, either as a whole or in part. But we would trust that we have adduced sufficient evidence in support of its several portions, to justify us in now assuming that there is not so great a weight of testimony against it, that we are unwarranted to avail ourselves of it, *for all the legitimate purposes of a simple hypothesis.*

And upon such a hypothesis, in what is it derogatory to the divine character that sin has entered this world?—or, to meet this awful question fairly and fully—that God not only permitted its entrance, but, from all eternity, pre-determined that he would do so?

When the Most High had decided upon creating intelligent beings, there was a choice between moral freemen and moral slaves. He rejected the idea of hearing nothing but the clanking of spiritual chains forever and forever, and that at the very least movement of every rational creature in all places of his dominions. But having determined to reign instead over an empire, in the which every living soul should enjoy the glorious liberty of a child of God,—each one of these souls must be made free indeed. God's will could not be substituted for theirs, neither could his power force their movements, and they be other than moral slaves. They could remain moral freemen, and yet do all things according to the divine will, only upon this plan:—that the divine will controlled their movements no more forcibly than by means of moral inducements and considerations,—such as by imparting new information, advising, warning, inciting, and the like. And this glorious gift of liberty could not be entrusted to a single creature without the peril that it would resist moral inducements and considerations, and become disobedient to the divine will. And shall God permit this peril to hang, impending at random, over every soul in the universe, until at last it becomes a dread reality, perchance here, perchance there, perchance everywhere in his dominions? Shall he not the rather pre-determine exactly when, and where, and to what extent, this fearful contingency of rebellion against his will shall be permitted to become a fact? Is not this the only course to avoid the

possibility that the time may yet come, when every free spirit in his empire may be in revolt against his throne, and he be compelled to deprive them of their liberty and rule over them by his power?

Yea, and what if this necessary predetermination upon the part of the Most High, just when, and where, and to what extent, in an empire of free spirits, he would permit rebellion against his authority,—what if it be likewise the predetermination of just those means by which to fill the universe with those very moral inducements and considerations which shall, on the one hand, not touch the freedom of a single soul, and yet, on the other, not leave a single other soul in jeopardy of using its freedom as against God? *Upon such a supposition, does not the moral good of the whole universe demand of the heavenly Father that he pre-determine just when, and where, and to what extent he will permit this experiment of rebellion against his authority?*

And this brings us to that other mystery—Christ upon the Cross! What an opportunity the sinning of this one world gives God manifest in the flesh, dying there upon Calvary, to teach all beings, in all places of his dominion, on the one hand, what a God of Love they are serving, and, on the other, how fearful will be the difficulties of regaining his favor, if they but once offend against his holy commandments! After seeing these truths thus illustrated, what un-fallen child of liberty, think ye, will venture thus to offend?

And then that further mystery, that sin should be permitted, through all these thousands and tens of thousands of years, to hold high carnival of death in the midst of the very souls among whom God's own Son hath died professedly that they might live,—what of this? Is not each moment of all these centuries operating to the same great end? Yea, for this serpent sin is a terrible thing to get abroad among the worlds! It requires a long reach of the ages that it may have space for development in all its aspects of monstrosity! Let it not perish too soon from this one world where it has entered! Let the Almighty, in the fierceness of his judgments upon it, allow it to live on until it is comprehended in all his dominions in the full maturity of its terrors! Let it be seen by all worlds as with

honied words it stands in the Eden of our race and allures us to our ruin! Let it be seen by them as it exalts its flaming crest and strikes its fangs into the heart of the very Son of God! Let it be seen by them when the judgment fires are at length kindled in this earth of God's love, beneficence and mercy, and it—this serpent sin—unfolds one coil after another of its malignity, and hate, and revenge from around the very hill of Calvary, and drops its hideous bulk and length finally and forever into the flame beneath! This, again, will be God's wisdom and mercy. Thus will he most securely circumvent its wiles in another Eden. For, after that it is fully manifested to the universe here, think you that it will ever prevail with another Eve? Nay, let it put on the aspect of a very angel of light, and yet upon its very first hint at disobedience to God, it will be known in all worlds, and by every child of liberty, as that monster sin, and be fled from in consternation! And thus shall Satan himself, in due season, become a chief and eternal column of support in that sublime structure of moral freedom, which Jehovah is rearing in all the universe.

And yet remains that mystery to some, the eternal punishment of the sinner who rejects salvation in Jesus! Who is prepared to say that this also is not a terrible necessity—an essential part and parcel—of the moral well-being of the universe? Look at it! Far up in the coming eternity,—long after this earth shall have been cleansed from every stain of sin, and sign of suffering, in the blood of the Lamb,—long after the very last tradition of its melancholy history shall have ceased to be related in the worlds around, because they have perished as physical structures,—yea, forever and forever, there shall exist in God's kingdom of free creatures the possibility of transgressing the divine commandments—the very moment moral inducements and considerations cease to operate for the maintenance of those creatures in the holy employment of liberty. May it not be, therefore, among the highest behests of the divine Mercy itself that the smoke of yonder place of torments likewise ascendeth up forever and forever?

So long as millions upon millions of worlds are in momentary

peril of moral shipwreck, and when all these worlds shall have been burned with fire untold centuries, so long thereafter as there shall be an empire of glorious natures, intrusted with the perilous power of resisting the will of the Most High himself,—yea, at what point in eternity itself are we prepared to say that the very Love of God could permit the extinguishing of those warning fires of perdition?

Thus, my friends, when we approach these great moral problems, not in their relations to this earth and time alone, but in their possible relations to the universe and eternity as well,—how they appear to simplify! Thus even now may we conceive a scheme of the moral universe so comprehensive, beneficent and grand, that Sin, and Death, and Hell become therein the very ministers of blessing!

“And yet this scheme involves so much of shame and misery!”—do you exclaim? No scheme of man can destroy the *fact* of shame and misery. God’s scheme of the universe includes them, because it includes the permission of sin. Our concern, therefore, is for some hypothesis by which, in some degree at least, we may reply to our souls, when they ask us, at times, those awful questions about the moral mysteries, in the midst of which we move. Our very destiny for all eternity is at stake in this tragedy of sin. And while, as children of Faith, we nothing doubt that in the divine plan of all worlds there is an ample reason for the permission of sin, though it be the mother of shame and misery, still, as children of Intellect and Liberty, the Lord’s people have in all ages felt to reverently inquire: *What can that reason be?* And thus in all ages they will continue to inquire, until at length they may say: *In this hypothesis we can rest from our questionings.* And what, therefore of the hypothesis we have been considering?

If God made free creatures, he could not render sin impossible. The most he could do, would be to define and limit the time, place and extent of its becoming actual, and then use the fact of sin, thus circumscribed, together with all its out-growths and fruits of shame and misery, to render it an impossibility henceforward and forever in all his vast empire of freedom. And, though the victims of sin here be so many millions, God is in

nowise responsible for their fate beyond endowing them with the glorious nature and prerogatives of his very children, instead of chaining them forever and forever as moral serfs to his throne. Yea, and though in themselves considered they be so great a multitude, and the aggregate of their suffering be so appalling, still, in the great scheme of the universe which we have been advancing,—what shall we say? Was ever end so magnificent compassed at so little sacrifice? All God's illimitable domain of free spirits secured in an eternal, loving, infallible obedience to his righteous will, through the moral influences which result from the transgression of, as it were, but a single soul! No wonder that in such a moral scheme the Most High himself becomes the very chief to sacrifice and suffer!

Such, therefore, our brother, is the hypothesis with which we have proposed to give you some relief from your troubles of spirit concerning the moral mysteries in which we are involved. If you have none so good, we rejoice in giving it you. If you have a better, give it us, we pray, and, throwing our own aside, we will forever thank you.

And now a single word, and we have done. Be what we have advanced or true or false, one thing is sure. Although the Psalmist knew it not, this earth is a part of the heavens. It likewise declares the glory of God. Its sinning is, in some way, as much to his praise, as is the purity of either world that stands above us, like a distant angel in shining robes, unfallen from the high places of the universe!



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